

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1 1. (Currently Amended) A ~~pre-assembled, freestanding~~
2 liftgate assembly, comprising:
3 a unitary ~~frame, the unitary~~ frame comprising an opposing
4 pair of side plates and an extension plate
5 extending between the side plates;
6 a hydraulically driven lift frame pivotally attached to
7 the side plates; ~~and~~
8 a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the lift frame
9 and supported at one end only; and
10 wherein the unitary frame, the hydraulically driven lift
11 frame, and the liftgate platform form a
12 freestanding assembly.

1 2. (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
2 wherein the opposing pair of side plates are adapted to
3 secure the freestanding liftgate assembly to an underside
4 of a vehicle body.

1 3. (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 2,
2 wherein the opposing pair of side plates are bolted to
3 the underside of the vehicle body.

1 4. (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
2 wherein the side plates in the unitary frame further
3 comprise formed steps.

5 (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
further comprising a hydraulic pump mounted on the
unitary frame and coupled to the lift frame.

6. (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
further comprising impact bumpers attached to the unitary
frame.

7. (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
further comprising brackets attached to the side plates
in the unitary frame for mounting vehicle lights.

8. (Previously Presented) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
wherein the lift frame further includes a lift frame tube
configured to function as an underride guard.

9. (Currently Amended) The liftgate assembly of claim 1,
wherein:
the liftgate freestanding assembly includes at least one
upper stacking member and at least one lower
stacking ~~member,~~ member; and ~~wherein~~
a profile of the lower stacking member is configured to
nest with a profile of the upper stacking member.

10. (Currently Amended) A vehicle liftgate assembly
comprising:
a vehicle having a substantially horizontal vehicle bed;
and
a liftgate ~~secured to the vehicle, the liftgate~~
comprising:

7 a unitary frame, the unitary frame comprising an
8 opposing pair of side plates configured to be
9 secured to an underside of the vehicle bed
10 and an extension plate extending between the
11 side plates;
12 an actuator driven lift frame pivotally attached to
13 the side plates; and
14 a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the lift
15 frame and supported at one end only;
16 wherein the unitary frame, the actuator driven lift
17 frame and the liftgate platform form a
18 freestanding assembly before being secured to
19 the underside of the vehicle body.

1 11. (Currently Amended) The vehicle liftgate assembly of
2 claim 10, ~~wherein:~~ wherein the side plates are vehicle
3 ~~has a vehicle bed; and the liftgate is~~ secured to the
4 underside of the vehicle body bed by bolts.

1 12. (Currently Amended) The vehicle liftgate assembly of
2 claim 10, wherein:
3 the vehicle further includes ~~a vehicle body and~~ a vehicle
4 chassis; and
5 the unitary frame of the liftgate is ~~attached to the~~
6 ~~vehicle body and~~ detached from the vehicle chassis.

1 13. (Currently Amended) The vehicle liftgate assembly of
2 claim 10, wherein:
3 the vehicle bed comprises a truck bed floor; and
4 the unitary frame is mounted substantially below ~~a floor~~
5 ~~of~~ the truck bed floor.

14. (Currently Amended) The vehicle liftgate assembly of claim 13, wherein the extension plate is mounted in a plane formed by the truck bed floor to provide a bridge from the truck bed to the liftgate platform when the liftgate platform is horizontally extended in the plane of the truck bed floor.

15. (Currently Amended) A liftgate, comprising:

(a) a unitary frame having an opposing pair of side plates, a trunnion tube extending ~~between the side plates~~ and an extension plate extending between the side plates, wherein the side plates are adapted to secure the unitary frame to an underside of a vehicle body;

(b) a lift frame having:

an opposing pair of parallelogram linkages each

having an upper arm, a ~~arms~~ and lower arm, a ~~arms~~ and proximal pivot member secured to the trunnion tube, ~~members~~ and a distal pivot ~~members~~ member; and

a lift frame tube extending between the lower ~~arms~~, ~~wherein the proximal pivot members are secured to the trunnion tube~~ arms of the parallelogram linkages;

(c) a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the distal pivot members and supported at one end only;

(d) a stop mounted on each parallelogram linkage adjacent the distal pivot member and configured to prevent rotation of the liftgate platform away from the upper and lower arms past a generally

horizontal orientation parallel with a bed of the vehicle body and configured to allow rotation of the liftgate platform toward the upper and lower arms to a generally vertical position perpendicular with the bed of the vehicle body when in a lowered position; and
(e) an extendable actuator pivotally secured at one end to the trunnion tube and at another end to the lift frame tube;

wherein: wherein,

before being secured to the underside of the vehicle body, the unitary frame, the lift frame the liftgate platform, and the extendable actuator forms a freestanding assembly with the liftgate platform in a stowed position; and

when the liftgate platform is rotated to a horizontal orientation, extension of the actuator raises the liftgate platform from a lowered position to a raised position while maintaining the horizontal orientation, and when the liftgate platform is rotated to a vertical orientation, extension of the actuator raises and inverts the liftgate platform into a the stowed position.

16. (Original) The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the side plates are secured to at least one sub-structure cross member of the vehicle body.

17. (Original) The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the extension plate is secured to at least one horizontal frame member of the vehicle body.

18. (Original) The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the side plates and the extension plate are secured to the vehicle body by bolts or welding.

19. (Original) The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the extendable actuator is a hydraulic cylinder.

Claim 20 (Previously Cancelled)

21. (Currently Amended) A method for providing a cantilever liftgate comprising the ~~following~~ steps of:

(a) providing a unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side plates and an extension plate extending between the side plates;

(b) pivotally attaching a lift frame to the side plates;

(c) rotatably attaching a liftgate platform to the lift frame so that the platform is supported at one end only; and

~~(d) securing the unitary frame to a vehicle body.~~

wherein the unitary frame, the lift frame, and the liftgate platform forms a freestanding liftgate assembly.

1 22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, further
2 comprising, ~~after steps (a), (b) and (c) have been~~
3 ~~completed~~, the step of shipping the freestanding liftgate
4 assembly to a customer.

1 23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, further
2 comprising, ~~after steps (a), (b) and (c) have been~~
3 ~~completed~~, the step of stacking the freestanding liftgate
4 assembly on top of another freestanding liftgate
5 assembly.

1 24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 23, further
2 comprising the step of packaging and shipping the stacked
3 ~~liftgates~~ freestanding liftgate assemblies together.

1 25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, further
2 comprising wherein the step of securing the freestanding
3 liftgate assembly ~~unitary frame~~ to a vehicle body ~~is~~
4 ~~accomplished~~ by bolting or welding the unitary frame to
5 the base of a truck bed.

1 26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, further
2 comprising the step of attaching a motion limit member to
3 the pivot member of the lift frame to confine a motion of
4 the liftgate platform between a first orientation and a
5 second orientation substantially perpendicular to each
6 other.

1 27. (Currently Amended) A liftgate, comprising:
2 a unitary frame including an opposing pair of side plates
3 and an extension plate extending there between,
4 each of the side plates having an upper edge
5 adapted for attaching to an underside of a body;
6 a ~~hydraulically driven~~ lift frame pivotally attached to
7 the side plates of the unitary frame and having a
8 pivot member;
9 a platform having a first side rotatably attached to the
10 pivot member of the lift frame, the platform being
11 supported at the first side only; ~~and~~
12 a motion limiting stop attached to the lift frame
13 adjacent the pivot member and configured to limit a
14 motion of the platform; and
15 wherein the unitary frame, the lift frame, and the
16 platform form a freestanding assembly.

1 28. (Currently Amended) The liftgate of claim 27, wherein the
2 upper edge of each side plate in the unitary frame is
3 adapted for attaching the freestanding assembly to the
4 underside of a vehicle body.

1 29. (Previously Presented) The liftgate of claim 27, further
2 comprising a plurality of bolts for bolting the upper
3 edges of the side plates in the unitary frame to the
4 underside of the body.

1 30. (Previously Presented) The liftgate of claim 27, wherein
2 the side plates in the unitary frame further comprise
3 formed steps.

1 31. (Previously Presented) The liftgate of claim 27, further
2 comprising a hydraulic pump mounted on the unitary frame
3 and coupled to the lift frame.

1 32. (Previously Presented) The liftgate of claim 27, further
2 comprising impact bumpers attached to the unitary frame.

1 33. (Previously Presented) The liftgate of claim 27, further
2 comprising brackets attached to the side plates in the
3 unitary frame for mounting vehicle lights.

1 34. (Previously Presented) The liftgate of claim 27, wherein
2 the lift frame further includes a lift frame tube
3 configured to function as an underride guard.

1 35. (Currently Amended) The liftgate of claim 27, wherein the
2 ~~unitary frame~~ freestanding assembly further includes at
3 least one upper stacking member on an upper edge of each
4 of the side plates and at least one lower stacking member
5 on a lower edge of each of the side plates, a profile of
6 the lower stacking member being configured to nest with a
7 profile of the upper stacking member.

1 36. (Currently Amended) A vehicle body assembly including a
2 vehicle body and a cantilever liftgate, the cantilever
3 liftgate comprising:
4 a unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side
5 plates and an extension plate extending there
6 between, the side plates having upper edges
7 configured to be attached to an underside of the
8 vehicle body;
9 an actuator driven lift frame pivotally attached to the
10 side plates; ~~and~~
11 a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the actuator
12 driven lift frame; and
13 wherein the unitary frame, the actuator driven lift
14 frame, and the platform form a freestanding
15 liftgate before being attached to the vehicle body.

1 37. (Previously Presented) The vehicle body assembly of
2 claim 36, wherein the upper edges of the side plates are
3 securely attached to the vehicle body by bolts.

1 38. (Currently Amended) The vehicle body assembly of
2 claim 36, wherein the lift frame is configured to be
3 attached to the unitary frame to form the freestanding
4 liftgate prior to the upper edges of the side plates
5 being attached to the vehicle body.

1 39. (Previously Presented) The vehicle body assembly of
2 claim 36, the cantilever liftgate further comprising a
3 motion limiting stop attached to the lift frame and
4 configured to limit a rotational motion of the liftgate
5 platform.

1 40. (Previously Presented) The vehicle body assembly of
2 claim 36, wherein the extension plate is substantially
3 coplanar with a floor of the vehicle body.

1 41. (Currently Amended) A cantilever liftgate for use with a
2 vehicle having a bed, comprising:

3 (a) a unitary frame having an opposing pair of side
4 plates, a trunnion tube and an extension plate
5 extending between the side plates, wherein the side
6 plates are secured to an underside structure of the
7 vehicle bed;

8 (b) a lift frame having an opposing pair of
9 parallelogram linkages, each having an upper and a
10 lower arms and a proximal pivot and a distal pivot
11 members, and a lift frame tube extending between
12 the lower arms, wherein the proximal pivot members
13 are secured to the trunnion tube;

14 (c) a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the
15 distal pivot members;

16 (d) a stop configured mounted on each parallelogram
17 linkage adjacent the distal pivot member to prevent
18 a rotation of the liftgate platform away from the
19 upper and lower arms past a first orientation
20 substantially parallel with the vehicle bed and

21 allowing a rotation of the liftgate platform toward
22 the upper and lower arms to a second orientation
23 substantially perpendicular to the vehicle bed; and
24 (e) an extendable actuator pivotally secured at one end
25 to the trunnion tube and at another end to the lift
26 frame tube, an extension of the actuator raising
27 the liftgate platform in the first orientation to a
28 raised position and inverting the liftgate platform
29 in the second orientation into a stowed position;
30 and
31 before being secured to the underside structure of the
32 vehicle bed, the unitary frame, the lift frame the
33 liftgate platform, and the extendable actuator
34 forms a freestanding liftgate assembly with the
35 liftgate platform in the stowed position.

1 42. (Previously Presented) The cantilever liftgate of
2 claim 41, wherein the side plates are secured to at least
3 one underside sub-structure cross member of the vehicle
4 bed.

1 43. (Previously Presented) The cantilever liftgate of
2 claim 41, wherein the extension plate is secured to at
3 least one horizontal frame member of the vehicle bed.

1 44. (Previously Presented) The cantilever liftgate of
2 claim 41, wherein the side plates and the extension plate
3 are secured to the vehicle bed by bolts or welding.

1 45. (Previously Presented) The cantilever liftgate of
2 claim 41, wherein the extendable actuator includes a
3 hydraulic cylinder.

1 46. (Currently Amended) A method for providing a cantilever
2 liftgate, comprising the steps of:

3 (a) providing a unitary frame comprising an opposing
4 pair of side plates and an extension plate
5 extending between the side plates;

6 (b) pivotally attaching a lift frame to the side
7 plates;

8 (c) rotatably attaching a liftgate platform to a pivot
9 member of the lift frame so that the platform is
10 supported at one end only; ~~and~~

11 (d) attaching a motion limit member to the pivot member
12 of the lift frame; and

13 wherein the unitary frame, the lift frame, and the
14 liftgate platform forms a freestanding liftgate
15 assembly.

1 47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, further
2 comprising, after steps (a), (b), (c), and (d) have been
3 completed, the step of securing the unitary frame to an
4 underside of a vehicle body.

1 48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47, wherein
2 the step of securing the unitary frame to an underside of
3 a vehicle body includes bolting or welding the unitary
4 frame to a base of the truck bed.

1 49. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 46, further
2 comprising, after steps (a), (b), (c), and (d) have been
3 completed, the step of stacking the ~~eantilever~~
4 freestanding liftgate assembly on top of another
5 ~~eantilever~~ freestanding liftgate assembly.

1 50. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 49, further
2 comprising the step of packaging and shipping the stacked
3 ~~eantilever liftgates~~ freestanding liftgate assembly
4 together.

1 51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein
2 the step of attaching a motion limit member to the pivot
3 member of the lift frame includes confining a motion of
4 the liftgate platform between a first orientation and a
5 second orientation substantially perpendicular to each
6 other.